



SHARP News



World AIDS Day



The next World AIDS Day is **1 December 2000**. The theme is "AIDS: Men Make a Difference". SHARP Instructors! Health Promoters! What have you planned to help prevent HIV and other STDs? An excellent Resource Guide is available on-line at http://www.aawhworldhealth.org/WAD00/WAD_2000.pdf. Other resources are available at: www.worldaidsday.org, <http://www.avert.org/worldaid.htm>, and <http://www.unaids.org/wac/2000/pressrelease.html> to help you plan your prevention activities.

According to a report released by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) for the launch of the year 2000 World AIDS Campaign, entitled Men Can Change Course of AIDS Epidemic, men should be involved more fully in the effort against AIDS. Young men are more at risk than older ones: about one in four people with HIV is a young man under the age of 25. "The time is ripe to start seeing men not as some kind of problem, but as part of the solution", said Peter Piot, Executive Director of UNAIDS. "Working with men to change some of their attitudes and behaviours has enormous potential to slow down the epidemic and to improve the lives of men themselves, their families and their partners."

The UNAIDS report challenges harmful concepts of masculinity and contends that changing many commonly-held attitudes and behaviors, including the way adult men look on risk and sexuality and how boys are socialized to become men, must be part of the effort to curb the AIDS epidemic. Men should become more fully involved in the fight against AIDS because men tend to have more sex partners than women, including more extramarital partners, thereby increasing their own and their primary partners' risk of contracting HIV, a risk compounded by the secrecy, stigma and shame surrounding HIV. This stigma may keep men and women from acknowledging that they have become infected. Focusing the campaign on men also acknowledges the fact that men are often less likely to seek health care than women. The report mentions a number of special circumstances that place men at particularly high risk of contracting HIV, including men who live away from their families who may pay for sex and use substances, including alcohol, as a way to cope with the stress and loneliness of living far from home; and men in all-male environments, such as the military, who may be strongly influenced by a culture that reinforces risk-taking.

The report advocates a careful balance needs to be struck between recognizing how men's behavior contributes to the epidemic and their potential to make a difference. As politicians, as front-line workers, as fathers, as sons, as brothers and friends, men have much to give. Men need to be encouraged to adopt positive behaviors, and, for example, to play a much greater part in caring for their partners and families. Dr Piot states that too often, it is seen as 'unmanly' to worry about avoiding drug-related risks, or to bother with condoms, and these attitudes seriously undermine AIDS prevention efforts. For the complete text of this report, visit website: <http://www.unaids.org/wac/2000/pressrelease.html>:

"Chart a Safe Course"

Sexual Health and Responsibility Program (SHARP)

Navy Environmental Health Center, Health Promotion, 2510 Walner Ave, Norfolk VA 23513-2617
(757) 462-5566 (DSN 253) fax: DSN 444-1345 <http://www-nehc.med.navy.mil/hp>